



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**WOODLANDS PREPARATORY SCHOOL**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

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## Woodlands Preparatory School

Full Name of School	<b>Woodlands Preparatory School</b>
DfE Number	<b>881/6026</b>
EYFS Number	<b>EY439501</b>
Address	<b>Woodlands Preparatory School Warley Street Great Warley Brentwood Essex CM13 3LA</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01277 233288</b>
Fax Number	<b>01277 232715</b>
Email Address	<b>headteacher@woodlandswarley.co.uk</b>
Head Teacher	<b>Mrs Barbara Harding</b>
Proprietor	<b>Mr Ken Lewis</b>
Age Range	<b>3 months to 11 years</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>149</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (85 boys; 64 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	<b>0-2 (EYFS): 23    5-11: 75 3-5 (EYFS): 51</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Miss Emma Carter</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection dates	<b>23 Apr 2013 to 26 Apr 2013</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in February and March 2010.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended. In April 2012 the school extended its EYFS setting to include children from the age of 3 months, and therefore registered at that time with Ofsted. This new provision was inspected by Ofsted in September 2012, and so was not inspected again as part of this visit. In the EYFS, this report refers only to children from the age of three upwards.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the**

**same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the proprietor and another director, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils, and visited the newly-registered EYFS provision for younger children, which was inspected by Ofsted in September 2012. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mr David Bunkell

Mr Richard Walden

Mrs Catherine Lane

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Head, ISA school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Woodlands Preparatory School is situated in Great Warley, near Brentwood in Essex, and is one of two schools in the area owned by Woodlands Schools Ltd. The company is administered by directors belonging to a family, of whom one member is the proprietor. In addition, two other directors have been appointed from educational backgrounds.
- 1.2 The school opened in 1983 and previously occupied a number of other local sites, before becoming established in its present location, a former farm on the outskirts of the village. It had been a co-educational day school for pupils aged from three to eleven years, but in April 2012 it extended its Nursery provision to children from the age of three months. This necessitated registration with Ofsted, who conducted an initial inspection of the new setting in September 2012. Currently 149 pupils attend the school, including 74 in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Boys slightly outnumber girls in most year groups.
- 1.3 The school aims to combine all that is traditionally best, together with progressive and forward-thinking ideas, to enable pupils to become socially responsible citizens and life-long learners. It seeks to foster curiosity, independence and a love of learning in a happy and safe environment, with the intention of allowing the pupils to achieve their full potential in personal, social, spiritual and academic development.
- 1.4 The pupils come mainly from professional families, and due to the proximity of the M25 and other major routes, some live a considerable distance away. A range of cultural backgrounds is represented in the school, reflecting the diversity of the local population. Three pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL), and support is given as necessary. Twelve pupils receive learning support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Admission to the school is not based on pupils' academic ability. The ability profile of the school is above the national average. Most pupils are of at least above average ability, and in some cases are of well above average ability.
- 1.5 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used by the school from Reception onwards and throughout this report to refer to year groups. The year group nomenclature used by the school for the Nursery and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

### ***Nursery***

School	NC name
Little Acorns	Nursery (3 months to 3 years)
Early Years	Nursery (3 to 4 years)

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 The achievement of the pupils is good, because of their positive attitude to learning and their resourcefulness. Pupils of all ages and abilities sustain a good rate of progress. Those with SEND or EAL make at least similar progress to others, and pupils identified as high achievers make more rapid progress. Some pupils go on to a range of independent schools, sometimes achieving scholarships, and others are successful in gaining places at maintained grammar schools. The excellent curriculum, based on creative learning, is enhanced by many trips and visitors, also adding to the pupils' success, as does the good overall quality of teaching. Marking is usually thorough and often includes praise and targets for future improvement, though the presentation of written work is sometimes untidy. Pupils are successful beyond the classroom, with achievements in sport and music. Extra-curricular activities contribute very well to school life. The quality of the provision in the EYFS is good overall.
- 2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent. Relationships within the school, including in the EYFS, are extremely positive, and all adults are excellent role models, providing the highest standard of pastoral care for the pupils. Pupils take on responsibilities within the school, and look after each other very well. Arrangements for health and safety are good. Safeguarding the welfare of the pupils is of utmost importance to all staff, and staff are trained appropriately. Regulatory requirements are almost all met, but in some pupils' washrooms only cold water is currently provided for hand washing.
- 2.3 The proprietor provides excellent oversight of the school. Statutory duties are discharged diligently, assisted by members of the board of directors. Excellent leadership and management at all levels enable day-to-day school life to proceed calmly and efficiently; areas for development are identified and action taken effectively. In the EYFS, all adults have a good knowledge of how young children learn. In response to their pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were highly supportive of much that the school does for their children. A small number of concerns were expressed; inspection findings did not support these views. Recommendations of the previous inspection have all been addressed and met fully.



## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

2.4 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore it is required to:

- ensure that all washing facilities have an adequate supply of hot and cold water [Part 5, paragraph 23F.(1)(b), under Premises and accommodation].

### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

2.5 In addition to the above regulatory action point, the school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Improve the presentation of pupils' work to ensure a more consistent standard throughout the school.
2. In the EYFS, plan open-ended activities to develop children's ability to think for themselves, identify problems, make decisions and devise their own solutions.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

#### **3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning**

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievement and learning is good.
- 3.2 This contributes to fulfilment of the school's aim to allow the pupils to achieve their full potential in personal, social, spiritual and academic development. By the end of the Reception year most children know letters and sounds, which they use effectively as they become fluent readers. They are less confident writers and there are limited opportunities to develop emergent creative emergent writing; they spend excessive time copying over words and sentences. By this stage, most children can count reliably to 20 and work confidently with single digit numbers. They use appropriate mathematical language, can recognise flat and solid shapes, and can demonstrate different methods of recording. In the best examples observed, children were able to explore, practise and talk about their understanding of mathematics in a range of contexts, including imaginative play. Children are keenly interested in the world around them, and when their interest is stimulated they can concentrate for sustained periods of time.
- 3.3 Pupils of all ages speak well and express themselves clearly, and younger pupils frequently answer questions in full sentences, often with imaginative vocabulary. They listen well, read competently and, in most cases, write fluently. Those with SEND achieve particularly well in light of their particular needs. Pupils reason well, and persevere when faced with challenges. They think logically and independently when opportunities for independent learning are presented. Pupils have developed their creative skills, put to good effect in drama and musical performance. Mathematical knowledge is applied well, and used in other curriculum areas, such as the symmetrical designs seen in art. A range of competitive sporting fixtures takes place, in which the pupils are often successful, particularly, for example, in cross-country running. Individual pupils succeed in instrumental and singing examinations. Extra-curricular activities contribute to pupils' achievements, with a 'passport' system to record successes in sporting activities.
- 3.4 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against a fixed national norm but it is judged to be higher than national age-related expectations, based on inspection evidence including lesson observation, scrutiny of written work and discussions with pupils. This also includes consideration of the levels at which pupils are working in relation to national targets, and their results in commercially available standardised tests. Pupils are successful in following a wide-ranging curriculum, based largely on creative learning, with time also allocated to the techniques for reasoning tests included in entry requirements for some senior schools. Pupils are successful at the age of 11 in entry examinations to senior independent schools or to maintained grammar schools. Some pupils gain independent school scholarships. Pupils sustain a good rate of progress when compared with those of similar, mainly above average ability. Pupils with SEND or EAL make progress that is at least comparable with that of others, and for pupils identified by the school as high achievers, progress is more rapid, as it is at times for those with SEND. In the EYFS, children achieve good progress across most areas of learning.
- 3.5 The pupils have highly positive attitudes to their work, with particularly well-developed oral expression. They are notably eager and resourceful, and keen to do well. Some pupils take pride in the presentation of written work, but for others

handwriting is poor, work lacks dates or titles, and mistakes are sometimes untidily crossed out. The pupils work well on their own, or when collaborating in pairs or larger groups, such as in group compositions in music lessons.

### **3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision**

- 3.6 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.7 The curriculum gives pupils a rich learning experience. It includes all the National Curriculum subjects, with the addition of French, and its breadth and balance enable pupils of all abilities to learn and make good progress. This strongly supports the aim of the school to foster curiosity, independence and a love of learning, as pupils study subject matter very closely suited to their ages and aptitudes. With its particular focus on cross-curricular creative learning, the curriculum provides a thorough range of opportunities, from which staff collectively create highly interesting, stimulating and challenging lessons around the topics chosen. This framework facilitates the use of topics of many kinds, including current affairs, for example the 2012 Olympic Games. The recommendation of the previous inspection to increase the teaching time for history and geography has been implemented, and the school day has been restructured to allow for shorter lessons in subjects where this is deemed beneficial. The planning process provides teachers with the freedom to focus in much greater depth for a period of time on certain aspects of the curriculum considered necessary, but the balance is still carefully maintained throughout the year. Pupils in Reception and Years 1 and 2 are divided into mixed-age groups for some parts of their English curriculum, which enables teachers to focus very closely on individual requirements, with very small class sizes. Specialist teaching in a few subjects gives further opportunity for pupils to study in more depth, for example in music, drama, French and physical education. Swimming is also taught every week throughout the year. Each day starts with a 'wake-up' activity of exercise routines performed to lively popular music, with teachers joining in. Pupils' personal development is well supported through a comprehensive personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, which also includes citizenship.
- 3.8 In the EYFS, curriculum planning gives close attention to the children's needs, which are for the most part met through a range of activities. However, opportunities for child-initiated, purposeful play linking imaginatively with the EYFS curriculum are less well developed. All the adults have a good knowledge of the EYFS curriculum and provide a range of opportunities for learning, which engage and interest the children.
- 3.9 The promotion of cross-curricular learning has included, for example, the collection of natural materials during a Charles Darwin inspired 'thinking walk' to use in both art and science. The curriculum is further extended by the use of specialist teachers on Friday afternoons for creative arts and sports in mixed-aged groups in the upper part of the school, while younger pupils have 'golden time', including co-operative and imaginative play. Pupils' learning experiences are also strengthened by a programme of enrichment activities throughout the year. Older pupils recently visited the Natural History Museum, with each class studying material relevant to its current topics. Full-day special events occur regularly, for example a forensic science day, a theatre visit on the theme of Moses and the Egyptians, linking art and history, and puzzle challenge days.
- 3.10 A full and varied programme of extra-curricular activities provides the opportunity for everyone to participate in enjoyable and mind-broadening pursuits. These take

place at lunchtime and after school. They include sports and dance, practical pursuits such as gardening and sewing, choir, construction, and information and communication technology (ICT) clubs. All staff contribute to the programme, together with visiting specialist coaches, encouraging pupils to try out new activities to extend their experience.

- 3.11 Pupils benefit from the school's links with the community and with its sister school, for example through combined sports teams. The choir sings regularly in local residential homes. Pupils raise funds for charities, such as Comic Relief and a national children's charity. They participate with enthusiasm in local and regional sports events, including cross-country and trampolining competitions, and football tournaments.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.12 The quality of teaching is good overall.
- 3.13 In the EYFS, teachers and teaching assistants are often deployed to support or extend small groups. The assistants make a highly valuable contribution, especially when they have been involved with the planning and organisation of lessons, and thus understand the teaching objectives and needs of the children. The EYFS staff use language that extends and develops the children's communication skills. For most children this results in fluent and imaginative verbal expression. The best planned EYFS lessons enable children to identify problems and find solutions in all areas of learning, although many tasks and activities seen were teacher led to a great extent, limiting the development of independence and creativity in the children. Where there is less challenge and fewer opportunities to investigate independently, the children are less focused on their tasks and progress is less rapid.
- 3.14 In a significant proportion of the lessons observed in the main school, teaching was of excellent quality, and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. This helps pupils of all abilities to make good progress and to achieve the best of which they are capable. Teachers know their pupils extremely well, and planning is based on understanding their needs and making appropriate provision for each individual. Teachers make good use of resources, including interactive whiteboards and other aspects of ICT, to capture and develop pupils' interest and eagerness to learn. In the most successful teaching observed, the most able pupils were challenged and support was provided for those who needed more time to reflect, whilst lessons proceeded at a brisk and stimulating pace; activities were carefully planned to provide opportunities for constructive interaction, both between the teacher and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves.
- 3.15 Teachers have strong subject knowledge, which enables pupils to make progress in each year throughout the school. Teaching generally encourages pupils to apply themselves to all tasks with good concentration and perseverance, supported by high expectations and standards of behaviour. In the best lessons, teachers use a variety of stimulating teaching methods, in a warm and encouraging shared quest for learning, which keeps pupils engaged and eager to learn. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Teachers have a strong rapport with their pupils and praise them warmly. Their high expectations and reassurance encourage pupils to take risks in suggesting answers even if they are not sure whether they are correct. On occasions teachers do not ensure high standards of presentation of pupils' written work, and a very wide variety was observed. Pupils are confident that they will receive support if required, and they can avail themselves of a 'traffic light'

system to indicate to the teacher how well they understand an assignment, and how much help they may still need with it.

- 3.16 Regular, suitable assessments are used to ensure that lessons are appropriate to the pupils' stage of development. The best marking is generally thorough, encouraging and supportive. Much of it is undertaken with the pupil present, to enable discussion and amendment.
- 3.17 In the EYFS, staff carry out regular child observations and use these effectively to inform future planning. They know well the strengths and areas for development for the setting and every child, and these are recorded and used to inform parents. Children with EAL are supported, and those who may have special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified at an early stage. Pupils of all ages with SEND are extremely well supported, so that they significantly grow in confidence and make optimum progress. A range of effective strategies enables them to produce writing of a high standard in relation to their particular difficulties.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils**

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The pupils are courteous, confident, articulate and mature for their age, reflecting well the school's aim for them to become socially responsible citizens and achieve their full potential in personal, social and spiritual development. In the EYFS, the programme for personal, social and emotional development enables the children to contribute confidently to school life; all make excellent progress in their personal and social development.
- 4.3 The pupils have developed a strong sense of spiritual awareness, as seen in an assembly about Pentecost, where pupils made mature and insightful suggestions regarding the nature of the Holy Spirit. Pupils and staff celebrate and value achievements publicly, strengthening each pupil's sense of personal worth. Pupils have developed a strong appreciation and understanding of non-material concepts through many aspects of the curriculum and use of the extensive school grounds for various purposes, such as the nature trail and pond.
- 4.4 Pupils have developed a strong moral awareness, distinguishing right from wrong, as part of the school's pervading culture of courtesy and respect for one another, modelled effectively by the staff and also in the good example set by older pupils. In the EYFS, staff expect courtesy, good behaviour and endeavour. They demonstrate these qualities themselves and the children successfully imitate them.
- 4.5 The pupils' social awareness is well developed. They relish the opportunity to take responsibility in the classroom at all ages. Each class elects a form captain, who carries out tasks to help the class operate more effectively. Older pupils are proud to serve as play leaders to help younger pupils at break times. The pupils readily participate in activities to raise funds for charities, themselves baking cakes and planning special activities. Pupils from Years 2 to 6 gain an understanding of democracy and learn both to express their views and to listen to others through the weekly meetings of the school council, run by the pupils themselves. Senior pupils take seriously their leadership roles as head boy and head girl or house captains, making awards of certificates to deserving individuals and announcing house points in celebration assemblies. In the EYFS, children interact happily with adults. They learn to work co-operatively with their peers, share resources and listen to one another's ideas. Other pupils are tolerant and patient with each other, accepting differences and maintaining the attitude of mutual respect that permeates the whole school community.
- 4.6 Pupils have an excellent appreciation of their own and other cultures, strengthened by recognition of the ethnic diversity within the school. They gain a deepening understanding of other cultures and faiths through the curriculum, including the PSHE programme and religious education lessons. They consider that cultural diversity adds richness to life.
- 4.7 By the time they leave the school, the pupils have an excellent standard of personal development and reflective maturity to equip them to succeed in the next stage of their education.

#### **4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care**

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 The school meets its aim to provide a happy and safe environment. Relationships are warm and relaxed. Pupils say that they feel extremely safe and happy. The staff know individual pupils' personalities very well and provide excellent support and guidance for their personal development. Relationships between pupils of all ages, and with staff, are excellent. Older pupils set a good example to younger children, demonstrating respect and concern for one another. Co-operation and courtesy are evident in all areas of school life and, consequently, the atmosphere throughout is warm and caring. In the EYFS, relationships are very good and children feel safe, secure and valued. Each child has a 'key person' to ensure that all needs are met. There is a strong focus on being part of a caring community.
- 4.10 The school promotes a healthy lifestyle by providing a good range of physical activities both in and out of curriculum time. Pupils make good use of the school's outdoor facilities. The pupils enjoy a healthy and nutritious lunch and great care is taken to provide for all dietary requirements. Catering staff take a keen interest in the pupils' eating preferences and ensure that mealtimes are a pleasant experience. Breakfast is available for pupils, when parents may join their children. Children in the EYFS have many opportunities to be active outside the classroom. They are encouraged to eat healthily at lunchtime, and in addition have suitable snacks during the day. Independence is developed; children learn to dress themselves and look after their personal hygiene.
- 4.11 Good behaviour is promoted consistently, with emphasis on reward rather than sanctions. Pupils almost invariably behave well in lessons and around the school. Any minor inappropriate behaviour is gently admonished, and pupils are encouraged to discuss their feelings and manage their emotions so that they are aware of their effect on others. In response to the questionnaire, a very small number of pupils indicated concerns about the way in which bullying is handled. However, in discussion, pupils could not recall any incidents of bullying and were appreciative of the care they receive. Inspection evidence reinforced the view that the school works effectively to prevent bullying.
- 4.12 The pupils know that their views are listened to and express confidence that, should they have any concerns, there are many adults to whom they can turn for help. The school council allows them to express their ideas and contribute to change. As required, the school has in place a plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND. Measures have been taken when possible to improve access to buildings for any pupils with restricted mobility, but access to upper floors is entirely by stairs.

**4.(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety**

- 4.13 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.14 Arrangements for safeguarding the pupils' welfare follow all official guidance. Prospective staff are subject to all the necessary recruitment checks and are trained in safeguarding procedures when they being work. Comprehensive follow-up training takes place every three years, in addition to reminders of basic principles at the start of every term. Multi-agency training for the leadership in her capacity as child protection officer, together with the deputy heads, is held every two years.
- 4.15 Measures are taken to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards. Detailed risk assessments have been made for all parts of the premises, and remedial action taken very promptly whenever specific and avoidable hazards have been identified. A computerised system sends automatic reminders to relevant staff when any health and safety checks are due. Great care has been taken to segregate vehicular and pedestrian movement around the school site, and to prevent any unauthorised access. In the EYFS, the setting is well organised, and any issues are quickly addressed. Admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained and archived.
- 4.16 Accommodation is provided for any pupils who are injured or become ill at school, equipped with washing facilities and near to a lavatory. All toilets for pupils are adjacent to washbasins. However, some facilities are currently equipped only with cold water for hand washing.
- 4.17 Children's welfare has a high priority in the EYFS, and their emotional and social needs are well supported by adults. Provision for the children's well-being is good. The safety of the setting gives children confidence to contribute their opinions and volunteer ideas. The colourful and welcoming environment, supported by familiar routines and resources, provides comfort and security.



## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The proprietor, along with the board of directors, has a clear vision for the future growth and success of the school, playing a significant part in enabling it to achieve its aim to foster curiosity, independence and a love of learning in a happy and safe environment, and thus ensuring that the school continues to flourish.
- 5.3 The family members of the board are advised by the two educationalists who have been recruited to directorships, enhancing links between the board and senior staff, working closely with the leadership. Great care is taken to ensure that high quality staff are recruited, and that suitable investment is made in accommodation and resources. The proprietor takes a close personal interest in all parts of the school and visits frequently. The EYFS has recently been a key focus for development, including lowering the starting age of children from 3 years to 3 months.
- 5.4 In addition to the regular meetings of the full board, three committees effectively oversee areas of the school's organisation. The services of a specialist human resources company are used effectively to support the school in relevant matters of law and policy compliance.
- 5.5 The proprietor ensures that all statutory responsibilities are met, including an annual review of safeguarding and child protection arrangements throughout the school.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians**

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.7 Effective leadership is successful in realising the school's aim to combine all that is traditionally best, together with progressive and forward-thinking ideas. Senior leadership and management ensure that regular monitoring and evaluation of policies take place, and that they are all correctly implemented. Robust safeguarding and recruitment procedures confirm staff suitability, and training in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety takes place for all staff.
- 5.8 Those with leadership and management responsibilities provide clear educational direction, identifying and prioritising areas for improvement. Detailed planning is effective, including a comprehensive school development plan and departmental plans. Senior managers and subject co-ordinators carry out effective monitoring, and meet regularly to discuss outcomes. The use of regular assessment means that individual pupils' progress is tracked, and their learning supported. Pupils are prepared as appropriate for entrance examinations to independent or selective maintained senior schools, and future school choice is discussed with parents in advance to make transition as smooth as possible.
- 5.9 The recommendation of the previous inspection to increase the rigour of the staff appraisal system and increase staff training opportunities has been met in its entirety. Thorough appraisal now takes place for all staff each year, including those

in the EYFS, and staff have attended many courses, often taking place in school, in addition to training from other providers elsewhere.

- 5.10 Management at all levels is successful in securing, supporting, developing and motivating sufficient high quality staff, and ensuring that they are suitably trained for their roles. Effective systems ensure that all teachers have appropriate resources and budgets, with priority given to any matters with health and safety implications, although the need to provide both hot and cold water for hand washing had been overlooked. However, plans are already in place to refurbish these washrooms. Leadership and management staff within the EYFS are focused on helping all children to make good progress in their learning and development, and promoting their welfare. Staff in the EYFS co-operate successfully in planning, delivering the curriculum and evaluating their practice for further improvement, and ensuring the safeguarding of children's welfare.
- 5.11 The outside environment of the EYFS has been much improved in response to a recommendation of the previous inspection, to develop this area when circumstances permit. It now provides a year-round, attractive space for the younger children to explore and test their physical abilities in a safe area that gives them security to take risks, face challenges, and benefit from fresh air and outdoor learning opportunities. Although the relocation of their classroom means that the older children in EYFS have more restricted access to the outside area, careful planning ensures that outdoor learning is given as much importance as indoor learning, with experiences that reflect the children's needs and interests. The EYFS setting demonstrates good capacity for improvement through the effective links between parents and members of staff.
- 5.12 Partnership with parents is very good at all stages. Questionnaire responses were very supportive of school leadership, with praise for the way in which the school enables pupils to be happy and safe, and achieves high standards of behaviour, and in which the school is led and managed. Parents said that they are encouraged to be involved in the life of the school, as observed when those of some new pupils came to lunch with their children at one of a series of dining events. Communication with parents is enhanced by 'home link' books and reading record books, which provide a helpful dialogue between home and school. The school uses questionnaires to seek the views of parents, and to invite them to make suggestions for future development.
- 5.13 Parents of current and prospective pupils are provided with all necessary information about the school. The required information is published on the school website and also available from the school office. The school provides a comprehensive parent handbook with detailed information.
- 5.14 In the EYFS, there are termly formal parents' meetings, and staff are available informally at other times. The thorough annual written report provides very good information to parents. A very effective partnership with parents ensures that children are given appropriate care and education using internal resources or external agencies if necessary. Weekly coffee mornings for a mother and toddler group take place for parents of current and prospective pupils, creating further effective links with home. Parents are confident that staff do the best for their children.
- 5.15 Parents of pupils in Years 1 to 6 receive clear and informative reports about their children's work and progress twice each year. The reports include the curriculum

covered in each subject and clear recommendations to support any individual areas of concern. Effort and attainment are graded regularly. In responses to the questionnaire, a small number of parents expressed dissatisfaction with the information that they receive about their children's progress. Inspection findings did not support this view. In addition, a few parents were unhappy with the manner in which any concerns had been handled. No inspection evidence could be found to support this. Formal complaints are extremely rare, and all responses to complaints are recorded carefully. All recent complaints have been resolved at the informal stage of the complaints procedure.

**What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.**